

## **Principals' Leadership Skills for Teachers' Job Performance: A Conceptual Perspective**

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**Abstract:** A school principal requires a series of appropriate leadership skills to bring the school, staff, and students to a high level of achievement and to maintain school effectiveness. The thrust of this paper centred theoretically on examining the leadership skills necessary to enhance teachers' job performance. Several scholarly articles were reviewed to buttress the arguments of the researcher, though some concepts differed because of the perspective of scholars. The paper concluded that the importance of teachers in any educational institution of teaching-learning cannot be overemphasized. This is because of the central role they play as implementers of the curriculum at the classroom level. Hence, the leadership skills of the principal are vital as they are often the key factor of difference between effective and ineffective educational systems. This paper suggested, amongst others, that school principals should be pragmatic and dynamic in the application of leadership skills and styles based on the level of morale of their teachers. Also, principals should always supervise teachers in their classes, and their supervision should not aim at fault-finding or witch-hunting, but should aim at improving the quality of instruction and learning situations.

**Keywords:** Leadership skill, school principal, factor, teachers' job performance, academic qualification.

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### **Introduction**

Education in a broad sense is a process by which an individual acquires many physical and social capabilities demanded of him by the society in which he is born to function. In an ideal sense, it is an agent of change, the single most significant complex of socio control tools for national development is found in the educational system be it formal or informal. As it is, there are stakeholders saddled with the responsibility of managing and channeling these socio control tools to produce refined individual equipped with the right skills to be self-reliant. It is never a doubt that leadership skill of school principals is often the key factor of difference between effective and ineffective educational systems (Blackburn, 2009). According to some scholars, school principals with good leadership skills encourage positive school climates, including high-quality of school culture, teaching and learning, assessment, academic and non-academic performance, two-way communication; accountability, teacher and student attitudes, and relationship among school, families and the broader community (Chen, 2008). Educational leadership refers to the process of soliciting and managing the capacities and vitalities of teachers, pupils and parents toward achieving common educational aims. Hence, educational leadership refers to an individual or group of people who are in charge and lead schools, institutions, programmes and students to the best education (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

Educational leadership has been found to be an important characteristic of school effectiveness

(Kythreotis, Pashiardis & Kyriakides, 2010). This leadership is portrayed by the leadership skills the principal as the educational leader of the school exhibits. A skilled and competent principal is one who facilitates the use of the inputs to the school, in order to ensure the achievement of desired goals. She/he is the one who oversees all the processes involved in the running of the school for overall effectiveness. Skill, according to Gregory (2001), is used to denote expertise developed in the course of training and experience. The common factor for the different types of skills according to Gregory (2001) is that the leader has to match the demands of a particular task to the appropriate skill necessary for the effective achievement of such task.

Leadership skills may be considered as the learned ability to bring about pre-determined results with maximum certainty often with minimum use of time, energy or both (Knapp, 2007). Educational reform efforts in developed countries, have focused on the significance of the leadership role and skills of the principal for the achievement of school effectiveness (Kochamba & Murray, 2010).

Katz (1955), the first researcher to propose the skill approach to leadership, discovered that effective leadership depends on three basic skills: technical, human or interpersonal and conceptual. Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs and Fleishman (2000) proposed a five-component skill-based model of effective leadership which had problem-solving skills, social judgement skills and knowledge skills at the core of its components. Hoy and Miskel (2000) ascertained technical, interpersonal, conceptual and administrative skills as skills that the principal as the school leader should possess for increased teachers' performance and school success. Peterson and Van Fleet (2004) suggested ten categories of skills essential for effectiveness. They were technical, analytic, decision making, human, communication, interpersonal, conceptual, diagnostic, flexible and administrative skills. Mumford, Campion and Morgeson (2007), identified four general categories: cognitive, interpersonal, business and strategic skills. Another set of researchers, Richter, (2006), was of the opinion that leadership skills are divided into three domains: transformational, managerial and instructional. The various sets of researchers found differing categories of leadership skills which were not all related, to be essential for the achievement of organizational effectiveness through enhanced staff performance.

Principals as leaders who are in a position to influence others must have the skills that will make them take advantage of that position. We can therefore conclude that school effectiveness would depend on the competence of a principal. To be competent as school leaders, principals need the requisite leadership skills.

Five domains of leadership skill that have also been associated with effective school principals were instructional leadership, cultural leadership, strategic leadership, educational management leadership and organizational management leadership. For examples, some scholars have discussed about the significant roles of school principals as instructional leader (Blackburn, 2009; E-Lead, 2008; Alvy & Robbins, 2005), and some of them emphasized the importance of principal cultural leadership for school effectiveness and student achievement (Blackburn, 2009; Glantz, 2008; Karakose, 2008; Hallinger, 2004; Lam, 2003) while others focused on the significance of strategic leadership and educational management leadership (MBE, Newsletter, 2004).

## Conceptual Clarifications

### Concept of Leadership

Definition of leadership differs because perspective of scholars differs. Leadership according to Aquinas (2005) is a process of influencing an individual or group towards goal attainment. Similarly, Dare (2009) defined leadership as an influence directed at an individual or a group. He argued that leadership role requires attention to individuals and organization. Wikipedia (2007) viewed leadership as the process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common goal or task. It is ultimately about creating a way for making people to contribute to making something extra

ordinary happen. The above definitions are important because they place emphasis on the vision of a leader (goals or objectives) while also highlighting the necessary interaction between the leader and group members. Essentially, a leader is seen as filling the gap between subordinate desires and abilities on one hand and organizational goals and requirements on the other hand. This could be the reason why Hanson (1991) differentiated between successful and effective leadership. Successful leadership according to him, is the ability to get others to behave as the leader intended. The job gets done and the manager's needs are satisfied, but those of the others or group are ignored. Leadership therefore is the ability of the leader to induce subordinates to work with confidence and zeal (Aquinas, 2005). People working in schools or organizations need leaders who could be instrumental in guiding the efforts of groups of workers to achieve the goals of both individuals and organization. This is why Wikipedia (2007) places emphasis on the vision of the leader. Leadership requires an understanding or respect for the power dynamics between the influencer and the follower. Hunt (2004) believes that leadership is not merely a top-down process, but it can be exercised sideways, and down-up throughout an organizational hierarchy. This means that leaders and followers can change roles, depending on the direction of the influencing process. In other words, followers are not static, but play an important role in the leadership process. It is clear that leadership has been identified as a crucial factor in institutional effectiveness. It is a major factor in the determination of the success and progress not only of an institution, but also of a nation. It implies taking initiatives or initiating new structure or procedures for the achievement of the stated objectives. Owan (2002) also agreed by saying that leadership is quite central, and that the proper functioning of any organization depends to a very large extent, on the ability of whoever is the head to effectively utilize both human and material resources to achieve the goals of such an organization. It is clear from the above that leadership involves the occupation of a position in an organization such as a school where the principal is entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating and directing all others towards the achievement of the school goals. The extent to which he is able to perform these functions will not only depend on the position he occupies as the principal, but also on his personal characteristics and leadership styles he adopts. Leadership position can be seen at different levels such as in the school where professional type of leadership which in itself requires a high degree of academic and skill acquisition (Udeazor 2004). It brings the expertise knowledge of the leader to influence the behaviours and actions of his followers. Professional leadership manifests, when the leader uses expertise knowledge to cause change in the behaviours of teachers. Leadership is also seen at the traditional setting. At this level, the legitimacy of such leadership is found in culture and tradition of the people (Udeazor 2004). The leader is obeyed because of the tradition of the people to obey their leader and respect his position and authority.

### **Leadership Qualities**

The earliest studies on leadership concentrated on the trait approach which is sometimes referred to as Greatman Theory (Trawathan & Nrepor 1979). The advocates of this theory view a leader as a person with well-developed important personality qualities such as physical energy, weight, height and attractiveness. They argued that leaders are born and not made. To them effective leadership qualities cannot be learnt (i.e., you are either born a leader or not). However, Wayne and Miskel (2008) criticized the trait approach by saying that it fails to assign weight value to the trait so as to make it easier to identify those attributes that are more important than others and contribute more to leader effectiveness. The trait approach also underrated environmental and situational factors that affect leadership effectiveness. Wayne and Miskel (2008) stated that there is no research conducted which shows a positive relationship between physical traits and leadership effectiveness. Stogdill (1981) asserted that a person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some traits because the impact of traits varies widely from situation to situation. The research conducted by Yuki (2002) revealed that possession of certain traits increases the likelihood that a leader will be effective, but it does not represent the original trait assumption that leaders are born and not made. The view that leaders are born was rejected (Bass

1990). The critics of the trait theory are of the view that situation in which the leader finds himself determines the degree of his effectiveness. If the situation is favourable he will succeed, but if not, he will fail, no matter what his personal qualities are (Wayne & Miskel 2008). Situation in this context includes the structure of the organization, the behaviour of the people in it and the organizational environment. According to this approach, if a leader moves from one social unit to another, or else and situations change, he may become either more successful or less. The criticisms against the situational approach brought about the interactional approach which represents a compromise between the trait and situational approaches. The proponents of this theory argued that some interaction between the qualities of the leader and characteristics of the situation in which leadership takes place is necessary. This means that an individual must develop personal qualities that are relevant to the characteristic activities and goals of the organized group. Researchers have so far indicated that the only innate quality which is indispensable for effective leadership is average intelligence (Wayne & Miskel 2008). This means that scholars have not yet found any correlation between effective leadership and such trait as physical qualities. Udeozor (2004) argued that leadership qualities required can be developed through education, training and practice. To Fadipe and Oluchukwu (2009), effective leadership depends on the personality and ability of the leader. Other qualities that can be developed according to Tijani and Shehu (2007) include knowledge, purpose, communication, skills, ability to work with others, commitment, fairness and impartiality. To Afolayan (1982) leadership qualities required are as follows: (a) ability to clarify goals, (b) sense of commitment, (c) self-confidence (d) technical competence (e) capacity to work with others (f) ability to communicate (g) ability to control one's emotions. To Aquinas (2005) the leader should possess human relation skills, conceptual skills, technical skills and personal skills. From the above, it is clear that a leader should have a dynamic personality, intellectual attainment, available disposition, unassuming temperament and knowledge of how to deal with his followers (Olu, 2009).

## **Leadership Styles**

After several years of studies, it became clear to researchers that leadership effectiveness is more complicated than to depend on only personal traits, situational and behavioural characteristics. As a result, researchers shifted emphasis to the study of leadership styles. Musaaazi (1982), Wikipedia (2007) and Dare (2009), stated that there are three basic styles of leadership. These are laissez-faire, autocratic and democratic leadership.

*i. Laissez-Faire Leadership:* Bass (1998) characterizes this type of leadership as the absence of transactions with followers. He further stated that laissez-faire leaders avoid expressing their views or taking action on important issues, fail to make decision, ignore responsibilities, provide no feedback and allow authority to remain dormant. According to Dare (2009) this leadership style is unpopular and should be discouraged.

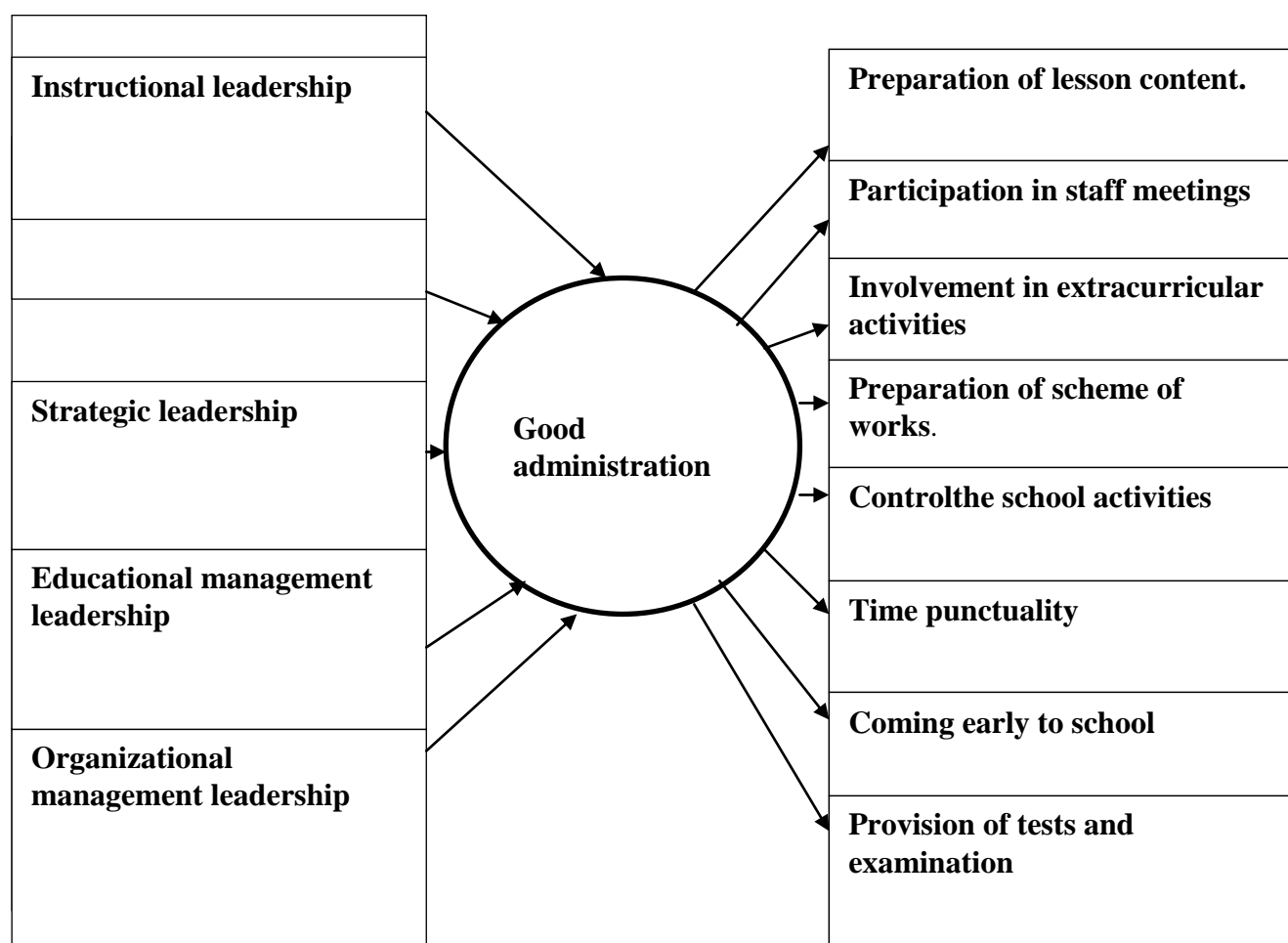
*ii. Autocratic Leadership:* This is also referred to as authoritarian leadership. Wikipedia (2007) stated that autocratic leadership is a type of leadership that uses fear and threats to get the job done. Under this leadership, all decision-making powers are centralized. The leader's power is derived from his status in the school. According to Afolayan (1982) this type of leadership does not trust that people will work without supervision.

*iii. Democratic Leadership:* Owan (2003) stated that Democratic leadership is the style in which there is a high consideration of the human factor in an organization as being important in the achievement of goals. Musaaazi (1982) observed that democratic leadership is based on the assumption that leader's effectiveness is derived from the group he is leading. The leader tends to encourage staff discussion and participation in decision-making (Dare 2009). The leader delegates authority to subordinates and believes in majority opinion. Leadership here allows freedom of expression and sees subordinates as partners in progress. Decisions in democratic leadership are not unilaterally taken. This type of leadership according to Owan (2003) maintains a healthy relation with staff as the leader is always interested in their well-being.

iv. *Transactional leadership*: These leaders motivate followers by exchanging rewards for services rendered. According to Bass (1998), transactional leaders pursue a cost-benefit, economic exchange to meet followers' current material and psychological needs in return for contracted services rendered by the subordinates. Bass and Riggio (2006) however, believed that enhanced effort, effectiveness and job satisfaction result when transactional leadership is augmented with transformational leadership. In other words, the transactional leader recognizes the importance of instructional demands but tries to balance them with the aspirations of organization members.

v. *Transformational Leadership*: This type of leadership is an expansion of transactional leadership that goes beyond simple exchanges and agreements. These leaders are proactive, raise the awareness levels of followers about inspirational collective interests and help followers achieve unusual high performances outcomes (Bass & Riggio 2006). Transformational leadership has idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Idealized influence builds trust and respect in followers and provides the basis for accepting radical and fundamental changes in the ways individuals and organizations do their work. These leaders display conviction about important issues, exhibit high standard of ethical and moral conduct, sharing risks with followers in setting and attaining goals, consider the needs of others over their own and use power to move individuals or groups toward accomplishment of mission, vision and cause, but never for personal gain (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

### Principal's Leadership Skills Teacher's Job Performance



**Fig. 1.0 Conceptual Framework**Source: Researcher (2021)

Leadership is in fact, administration and has to do with general managerial functions. These functions must be directed towards achievement of equality and quality education performance, management of human and material resources, as well as maintenance of discipline. The roles of school principals have been on the increase. Principals presently serve as supervisors, classroom teachers, community leaders, government's representatives and so forth. In the words of Barth in Sergiovanni (2001), school principals too often must deal with these aspects of work superficially. The reasons for this can be understood as one examines the full range of responsibilities that principals have. He further describes the extent of such responsibilities as almost everything that happens in school and out. In that case, principals are responsible for personnel, making sure that employees are physically present and working to the best of their ability. As a matter of fact, principals should be accountable for academic achievement of all children, their minimum standards at each grade level, for the gifted, and of those who are neither. The principal has become a provider of social services, food services, health care, recreation programs, transportation and even security and expected to do more in inclusive programme, with all children, abled and disabled, learning together in the same classroom. Principals are indeed the most important people in our secondary schools, as they have the potential for improving and maintaining quality and equality education. Success or failure of our school programmes, depends on the individual principals' ability and skills to utilize school resources towards achievement of the set goals and improvement of teachers' and students' performance. The Principal has key tasks to perform in realizing the objectives of secondary education.

Apart from creating a comfortable teaching and learning atmosphere in the school, he is to provide effective leadership and enhance job performance among the teachers. The term job performance is a multidimensional concept that has been used in organizations all over the world. It is used to describe tasks done by workers in their various organizations. Motowidlo, Borman and Schmidt in Bullock (2013) defined job performance as the overall expected value from employees behaviours carried out over the course of a set period of time. Motowidlo et al in Bullock (2013) saw job performance as that entire worth of an employees' conduct which he performs over a certain period of time.

An employee is expected to perform some duties in his workplace, in which over a particular period may be assessed if he is really doing well or not. Campbell (1990) described job performance as something done by an employee or a person. This can be seen as a duty or obligation carried out by an employee. Job performance therefore, is the act of accomplishing a task for which an individual or employee is paid for. From these definitions, something valuable is expected from employee's behavior in the workplace. Job performance is usually associated with behavior and outcomes. Generally, the behavior of workers can make or mar the organization's goal and objectives.

The job performance of teachers in the public secondary schools in Nigeria has remained questionable in contemporary times as there is still public outcry. As a teacher, personal observation has shown that some teachers no matter the condition of service or the working conditions carry out their duties enthusiastically. These teachers exhibit high regard and value for their noble profession. They are always committed and willing to render academic services to students. They prepare their lesson notes and showcase their competency and mastery of their subject. They handle any extra-curricular activity assigned to them in the school wholeheartedly. They give assignments and supervise their classwork and even give more attention to students that are low achievers in the classroom. Their overall response to duties assigned to them by the principal or head of their subject department portrays high level of job performance.

### Teachers' Job Performance

The importance of teachers in any educational institution of teaching-learning cannot be overemphasized. This is because of the central role they play as implementers of the curriculum at the classroom level. This explains that what teachers do or do not do could directly or

indirectly affect the attainment of instructional objectives in the classroom. Consequently, scholars have often attributed students' learning outcome to certain teacher attributes such as their educational qualification, years of experience, classroom behaviour and even their job performance among others (Adu, Tadu & Eze, 2012; Bolarinwa, 2013; Fehintola, 2014). Job performance, may be referred to as the set of behaviors an individual performs toward achieving the goals of an organization and the focal outcome in the workplace. Performance can be regarded as almost any behavior, which is directed towards task or goal accomplishment in the views practice and in evaluating teacher's performance at the work place (Campbell & Pritchard, 1976). Good performance among teachers in an organization has many implications such as high motivation.

According to Hornby (2000), teacher's performance could be the teacher's roles of teaching students in class and outside the class. The key aspects of teaching involve the use of instructional materials, regular assessment to the students, making lesson plans, assessment of pupils, conducting field work, teachers' participation in sports, teaching methods, attending school assembly and guidance and counseling, so teacher job performance is the teachers' ability to integrate the experience, teaching methods, instructional materials, knowledge and skills in delivering subject matter to the students in and outside the classroom.

Performance is something, a person does, which is normally affected by motivation. When teachers are motivated, their performance automatically rises towards high level. In schools, teacher's performance can be seen in their interaction with students, with other teachers and with their superiors.

## **Conclusion**

The importance of teachers in any educational institution of teaching-learning cannot be overemphasized. This is because of the central role they play as implementers of the curriculum at the classroom level. For the teachers to raise their performance level and produce the desired results, certain leadership skills from the school head (principals) have been exhibited in a conducive work environment.

## **Suggestions**

Based on the conclusion and literature review of this study, the following suggestions were made:

1. School principals should be pragmatic and dynamic on the application of leadership skills and styles based on the level of morale of their teachers.
2. School principals should endeavour to enroll in leadership training programmes from time to time in order to enhance their leadership quality and efficiency for improved job performance of teachers.
3. Principals should always supervise teachers in their classes and their supervision should not aim at fault-finding or witch-hunting, but should aim at improving the quality of instruction and learning situations.
4. The principals should create values, cultures, safety practices and organizational structures that can make the work environment appealing for keen performance.
5. Principals should use various communication channels and methods when communicating to individuals or group so as to remove any communication gap or barrier that would affect teaching and learning in the school.
6. School physical facilities should be regularly maintained to attract and encourage regular attendance and enhance teaching and learning in schools.

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